

Cuomo Plan Would Limit Gas Drilling to a Few Counties in New York

By **DANNY HAKIM**
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ALBANY — Gov. **Andrew M. Cuomo**'s administration is pursuing a plan to limit the controversial drilling method known as hydraulic fracturing to portions of several struggling New York counties along the border with Pennsylvania, and to permit it only in communities that express support for the technology.

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The plan, described by a senior official at the State **Department of Environmental Conservation** and others with knowledge of the administration's strategy, would limit drilling to the deepest areas of the Marcellus Shale rock formation, at least for the next several years, in an effort to reduce the risk of groundwater contamination.

Even within that southwest New York region — primarily **Broome**, **Chemung**, **Chenango**, **Steuben** and **Tioga** Counties — drilling would be permitted only in towns that agree to it, and would be banned in **Catskill Park**, aquifers and nationally designated historic districts.

The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity because the deliberations in the administration are still continuing.

The strategy has not been made final and details could change, but it has been taking shape over several months. It would be contingent on hydraulic fracturing's receiving final approval from state regulators, a step that is not a foregone conclusion but is widely expected later this summer. Department of Environmental Conservation regulators last year **signaled their initial support for the drilling process** around the state, with exceptions for environmentally sensitive areas like New York City's upstate watershed.

Since that announcement, the Cuomo administration has been deluged with tens of thousands of e-mails and letters mostly objecting to the process, which is better known as hydrofracking or fracking, and protesters have become a regular presence at the Capitol.

Mr. Cuomo's administration is now trying to acknowledge the economic needs of the rural upstate area, while also honoring the opposition expressed in some communities, and limiting the ire of environmentalists, who worry that hydrofracking could contaminate groundwater and lead to other hazards. The administration had initially expected to allow 75 hydrofracking permits in the first year, but now expects to reduce that to 50.

In **fracking**, large amounts of sand, water and chemicals are injected deep underground at high pressures to extract **natural**

gas from rock formations.

President Obama expressed support for natural gas drilling in his **State of the Union address** this

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year, saying, “The development of natural gas will create jobs and power trucks and factories that are cleaner and cheaper, proving that we don’t have to choose between our environment and our economy.”

But concerns have persisted about the chemicals used in the process. Last year, for instance, federal regulators linked fracking to a contaminated water supply in part of central Wyoming.

In New York, while more than 100 communities have passed moratoriums or bans on fracking, a few dozen in the Southern Tier and in western New York have passed resolutions in favor of the drilling process.

“A lot of people look at this as a way to save our property,” said Dewey Decker, a farmer and the town supervisor of Sanford, in Broome County, just north of the Pennsylvania border. Residents of the town have already leased thousands of acres to a drilling company.

Mr. Decker said the area’s traditional dairy business had been in sharp decline, and the promise of fracking had already helped some residents.

He said there were “a lot of people who, when we signed and got the upfront money, were going to be losing their land and couldn’t pay their taxes.”

The Marcellus Shale is a rock formation that stretches from the Appalachian Mountains into the central and western parts of New York. State regulators believe that by limiting drilling to areas where the Marcellus Shale is at least 2,000 feet deep, risks of contaminating the water supply with toxic chemicals will be reduced. Regulators would require drillers to maintain a 1,000-foot buffer between water sources and the top of the shale formation.

Environmental groups have been divided over whether fracking should be allowed at all. Some mainstream organization have not completely closed the door on the idea of fracking.

“We recognize that gas is going to be part of our energy mix and it’s preferable to other types of fuels that are out there,” said Rob Moore, executive director of [Environmental Advocates of New York](#). “So it’s not really an option to say ‘no way’ to natural gas. But we’re not in a rush to see this resource extracted in New York.”

Mr. Moore expressed a number of concerns, like oversight of chemical use and disposal, and the added cost that hydrofracking oversight would create for state and local governments. “If this is going to happen,” he said, “we want to make sure it happens to the highest standards and doesn’t have the pace and scale of drilling in states like Pennsylvania, where it’s been fast and furious, and you’ve ended up with a lot of problems as a result.”

By contrast, smaller, more local groups have been adamant that fracking is inherently unsafe and should not be allowed anywhere in the state.

“Within five years, you’ll start to see these chemicals show up in the water system,” said Ramsay Adams, executive director of [Catskill Mountainkeeper](#), one of the more vocal opponents of fracking.

Mr. Adams added that he feared pristine regions of New York would be turned over to drilling companies, which would cut down trees, use large trucks and “bring every bad thing you could unleash on people.”

The critics have been countered by the industry’s considerable lobbying muscle. Ten companies or trade groups that lobbied on fracking and other issues of concern to the natural gas industry spent \$4.5 million lobbying in Albany over the last three years, according to an analysis prepared by the [New York Public Interest Research Group](#).

“Everybody wants groundwater protected and people protected,” said James Smith, a spokesman for the [Independent Oil and Gas Association of New York](#). “The industry is very serious about doing this safely here in New York. We know there is a great deal of scrutiny here, and our position is for safe development.”

But, Mr. Smith said, “overregulation is going to be a concern.”

“If the regulations are too severe, it will limit New York’s competitiveness with other states,” he added. “Developers won’t come here. Landowners won’t have the opportunity to mine their resources. Businesses, school districts, tax bases across the state will suffer, too, as a result.”

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Dr Moon · Texas

Another Liberal takes his Marching orders from the Environmentalist Crowd not doing what's best for the people of New York whose annual income has already decreased by \$5000.00 and now he takes a few more thousand from their medical budget or off the food table, to make the anarchist happy.

As has been documented and researched hundreds of times and used for more than 80 years, Fracturing oil or gas wells for increased production, is extremely safe and effective. I worked for an Oil Field Service Company in Texas and have been involved in the fracturing of more than 500 Wells in West Texas and I have never seen the fresh water table become contaminated from fracturing, the depths for fracturing are too deep to break into fresh water unless it was on purpose. Where you see on TV people's tap water burn, is caused from natural seeping of gas up through fissures in the ground. It's fairly common in certain areas, you can see gas bubbles in stock tanks, lakes and the oceans. Gas is much cleaner than coal fired electrical plants and emits fewer emissions than gasoline.

If only Cuomo allowed fracturing in the majority of the state, it would give cleaner air, an abundant fuel source and lower fuel prices, not to mention some good jobs would be created.

June 13, 2012 at 1:37 p.m.



MaryS447 · Broome County, NY

I have carefully researched the shale gas issue, I have visited shale gas extraction regions in PA, I have read the DEC's proposed regulations, and I

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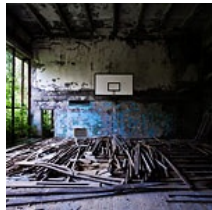
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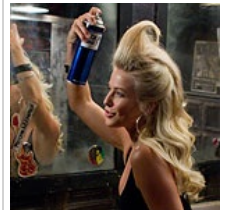
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